Draft
Bay Delta Conservation Plan Framework

(October 29, 2007)

1.0 Introduction

This Framework is intended to describe key elements of an overall approach to the development of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP), which is being prepared as a habitat conservation plan and a natural community conservation plan for the San Francisco Bay Delta pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA). The Framework describes several important topics that will be carried forward into the planning process for the BDCP, including a long-term approach to water conveyance, strategies for in-Delta habitat restoration and enhancement, objectives for an adaptive management and monitoring program, and a structure for plan implementation. For certain elements, such as conveyance, the Framework provides a moderate level of detail, commensurate with the level of evaluation undertaken thus far by the BDCP Steering Committee and its technical consultant team. Other elements are described more generally, with the expectation of the Steering Committee that these elements will be further developed during the course of the conservation planning process.

The purpose of this Framework is to memorialize the view of the Steering Committee thus far on how best to approach these important elements as it enters into the planning process. This Framework is not, however, intended to be a comprehensive and exhaustive enumeration of all of the elements of a scientifically sound and legally defensible conservation plan under the ESA or the NCCPA. Numerous other elements of an overall conservation plan will be developed during the BDCP process, and the Steering Committee anticipates that those elements will be appropriately identified in the BDCP work plan and schedule. The elements set out in this Framework will be further analyzed and developed, along with other necessary program elements, to ensure that the goals and objectives of the BDCP are met.

The Steering Committee intends to develop the content of the BDCP over the course of the next year through a public process. In this public process, the Steering Committee anticipates that additional ideas and approaches will emerge and the BDCP will further evolve. The resulting plan will then be fully analyzed under relevant state and federal environmental laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Therefore, all of the substantive decisions of the Steering Committee at this juncture about the desired content of the final plan are open to change and adjustment as the planning process matures and as new information warrants.

Finally, members of the Steering Committee also understand that the BDCP will ultimately reflect a comprehensive set of agreements. As such, none of the members of the Steering Committee is bound to any single element of the plan until agreement has been reached on the plan as a whole. Adoption of this Framework, and the

commitments made by the members of the Steering Committee to this Framework, should therefore be understood in this broader context.

2.0 Description of the Elements of the Framework

This section summarizes the key elements of the Framework for the development of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). Some of these elements, such as water conveyance infrastructure and habitat restoration and enhancement, are described with specificity based on direction provided by the Steering Committee. Other elements of the Framework will be considered by the Steering Committee during the BDCP process and thus are described more generally. The Framework describes the long-term approach to achieving the goals and objectives of the BDCP. The Steering Committee agrees that a phased implementation of key elements of the long-term approach will be necessary.

Key elements of the Framework are as follows:

- Habitat Restoration and Enhancement
- Water Conveyance Facilities
- Water Operations
- Other Conservation Actions
- Adaptive Management and Monitoring
- Scientific Input
- Cost and Funding
- Implementation Structure and Decision Making

2.1 Habitat Restoration and Enhancement

The BDCP will include a habitat restoration and enhancement component that will advance the plan's biological goals and objectives by increasing the quality and quantity of habitat for covered fish species. Habitat restoration and enhancement efforts will be directed toward areas within the Delta that offer the greatest conservation opportunities such as in Suisun Bay/Marsh and in the north Delta. Upon completion of the isolated conveyance facilities described in section 2.2 *Conveyance Facilities*, hydrodynamic conditions in the Delta would likely change in a manner that affords new opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement in the Delta. The following types of physical habitat restoration and enhancement actions will be evaluated for inclusion in the conservation strategy of the BDCP:

- Increasing habitat diversity and complexity, food production, and the availability of rearing habitat for covered species in freshwater tidal wetlands.
- Increasing food production for covered fish species and improving turbidity conditions for Delta smelt and longfin smelt by improving hydraulic residence time and tidal exchange in sloughs and channels.
- Increasing the availability, extent, and function of brackish and freshwater tidal habitats for covered fish species in Suisun Marsh.
- Increasing the extent of tidal inundation and area available for colonization of tidal wetland vegetation by constructing setback and interior levees in the Delta

and Suisun Bay/Marsh to increase food production and the extent of covered fish habitats.

- Improving migration pathways through the Delta for salmonids and other resident fish species.
- Increasing the availability and extent of seasonally inundated floodplain habitats to improve food production and increase the extent of rearing habitat for salmonids and sturgeon and spawning habitat for Sacramento splittail.

As new information is gathered and assessed during development of the conservation strategy for the BDCP, additional physical habitat restoration and enhancement opportunities and other conservation actions may be identified and evaluated based on their potential to contribute to the plan's conservation objectives.

2.2 Conveyance Facilities

To achieve the BDCP Planning Agreement's planning goals and conservation objectives through improved biological productivity, improved water quality, reduced entrainment and other means, the Steering Committee has concluded that the most promising long-term solution will involve the construction and operation of an isolated conveyance facility. For this reason the Steering Committee will proceed with the development and evaluation of a conservation strategy that incorporates an isolated conveyance facility with a point or points of diversion(s) on the Sacramento River and includes the ability to use existing facilities to divert water directly from the South Delta as determined by an evaluation of issues associated with facilities design and operating criteria. Because of the time required to permit and construct an isolated conveyance facility, the Steering Committee will also continue to develop and evaluate the benefits of infrastructure and operational modifications, particularly in the areas of Old and Middle Rivers, to improve the State Water Project's (SWP) and Central Valley Project's (CVP) ability to convey water through the Delta to achieve near-term conservation and water supply goals.

The long-term approach to water conveyance would utilize the following facilities:

- An intake facility with positive barrier fish screens on the Sacramento River near Hood or Clarksburg.
- A peripheral aqueduct and associated appurtenant facilities (e.g., pumping plant and siphons) that would traverse from the new intake facility on the Sacramento River southerly along an alignment in the east Delta parallel to, and west of, Interstate 5. The conveyance aqueduct would terminate south of Clifton Court Forebay and tie into the existing SWP and CVP pumping and conveyance facilities.
- Improved through-Delta conveyance, potentially using channel improvements, operable barriers, and levee improvements in the areas around Old and Middle Rivers to reduce entrainment and improve habitat functions.
- Continued use of the existing CVP Jones Pumping Plant and SWP Banks Pumping Plant and associated project facilities in the South Delta.

On the basis of the foregoing approach, the Steering Committee will develop more detailed descriptions of the conveyance facilities during the BDCP development process.

2.3 Water Operations

Criteria relating to the operation of water conveyance infrastructure to minimize adverse affects on covered fish species will be evaluated and included in the BDCP. These operational parameters, including species and habitat conservation and in-Delta water use needs, will be developed through the planning process for the BDCP.

2.4 Other Conservation Actions

Other conservation actions designed to help address a number of stressors on covered species will be evaluated and included in the BDCP, as appropriate. These stressors include:

- Exposure to toxics
- Non-native species competition and predation
- Entrainment at non-CVP/SWP intake facilities
- Harvest
- Reduced genetic diversity/integrity
- Effects of climate change

A list of conservation actions that may potentially address these and other stressors is included in the BDCP Conservation Strategy Options Evaluation (September 17, 2007) section 8.0 *Opportunities for Conservation Elements Available under all Options*.

2.5 Adaptive Management and Monitoring Program

The BDCP will include a comprehensive adaptive management and monitoring program to address uncertainties regarding the role and importance of various stressors and the capacity of the conservation strategy to achieve the BDCP's biological goals and objectives. Monitoring will be used to evaluate the success of the BDCP in meeting these biological goals and objectives, including the effectiveness of the conservation strategy to address the needs of the covered species. Specifically, the monitoring program will generate information to: 1) determine if biological goals and objectives are being met; 2) assess the effectiveness of conservation actions; and 3) provide feedback to guide adaptive management.

2.6 *Science Input*

The Steering Committee will seek, on an as needed basis, independent scientific input to further inform the development of the BDCP. The Independent Science Advisors' October 2007 Conservation Guidelines Report will be used as an information source to support development of the plan.

2.7 Cost and Funding

The BDCP will include an analysis of the costs associated with plan implementation, including one-time and on-going costs. This analysis will be used to determine the level of funding and other resources that will be required to implement the BDCP. The BDCP

will identify potential sources of funds for implementation, reflecting the concept of proportionality identified in the Planning Agreement, and will include assurances that adequate funding will be provided to implement the plan.

2.8 Implementation Structure and Decision Making

The BDCP will include a description of the steps and actions necessary to implement the plan, including an implementation approach and schedule for BDCP conservation actions. The plan will further detail a decision-making structure, that includes the establishment of an entity or entities to assume responsibility for plan implementation, and will assign specific functions and duties to such an entity(ies). The implementing entity(ies) would likely be responsible for such matters as habitat restoration and enhancement and other conservation actions; the adaptive management and monitoring program; and plan funding, oversight, and reporting.

3.0 Development of the Framework

[Text to come on process, information used, and rationale for the Framework development]

4.0 Information Needs for the BDCP Planning Process Ahead

[Text to come information needs and areas of uncertainty]

5.0 Next Steps in BDCP Development

[Text to come on future activities in the development of the BDCP]